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WHAT IS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE?

THE expression, "religious experience," I suspect is often used, without very clear conceptions of its meaning. That there is such a thing—that many have it—and that all should seek for it, there is no doubt. Many have it, who perhaps have never very distinctly considered it; and many, if they thought enough of it to discern its nature and worth, would estimate it far higher than they now do. Indeed every one has it, who is actuated by the principles and motives of the gospel; and every one obtains more of it, in proportion as his affections, his temper and conduct, are formed and governed by the instructions of our holy Redeemer.

Examples of the power of religion, judiciously selected, may awaken the thoughtless, stimulate the sluggish, give fresh excitement to those who have made some progress, and perhaps rouse even the vicious to serious reflection. But examples of religious experience are not always judiciously selected; and I believe that, without any evil intention, much evil has actually been done, by proposing those

only as examples of the power of religion, who have felt what others, perhaps not less pious, but differently constituted, or who have never been in the same circumstances, could not have felt. Much evil, I believe, has resulted from the opinion which has been so produced, that we can then only be said to have "experienced religion," when we can mark, with exactness the time in which we were first brought from darkness into marvellous light; and can retrace all the circumstances and events, by which we were delivered from sin, and became the children of God. I do not say, nor do I mean even to intimate, that men who have received such extraordinary impressions, are not often very affecting examples of the power of divine truth. But I mean that, *all* cannot be *such* examples; and that many, very many, under very different circumstances, in a different manner, and in different degrees, may have *as actual* experience of the efficacy of religious principles and hopes. In partial and unjust conceptions on this subject, originates much of that separating spirit, which deforms

and deranges the christian world; and many, whom our blessed Lord would have comforted and encouraged, from the same cause have endured unutterable fear and distress, and perhaps have been all their life time subject to bondage.

Distinctly to answer the inquiry, "what is religious experience?" we must first consider, *what is religion?*—for our experience, to deserve the name of religious, must at least be consistent with the great and primary principles of that religion, to whose power we attribute what we experience. I think there is no other way of considering the subject, which will lead us so directly to the most just and satisfactory conclusions.

In defining religion then, I should say, that it consisted of *all those doctrines, principles, and rules, which God has given for the regulation of the temper, affections, and conduct of man in this world, in order to his preparation for a better.* This is a very general definition; but, if I mistake not, it very plainly comprehends all which is necessary to a proper answer of the inquiry, "what is religious experience?" for, let religion consist of what you will, we can properly be said to experience the power of those parts of it only, which are of a practical nature.

Let this definition be admitted, and religious experience is, *an experience of THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE of the doctrines, principles, and rules, which God has given for the regulation of our*

tempers, affections, and conduct in this world, in order to our preparation for a better. This definition is also general; but the particulars which are included in it are, I think, very apparent. Nor am I aware that any fair example can be adduced of the power of religion, which will not illustrate and confirm its correctness. It admits of cases which may be very extraordinary; but I think enables us to judge with a good degree of accuracy, whether all the extraordinary cases which are produced, are actually examples of religious experience. It shows us also, that there may be much experience of this sort, which is not extraordinary, and yet not less important and valuable; not less adapted, when properly considered, to give consolation, and hope, and joy to those who feel it, than is that which is occasioned by some powerful effect, suddenly produced upon the mind or heart of a confirmed sinner, awakening him to a sense of his condition, and bringing him to repentance and holiness.

It is by the application of principles to practice alone, that we can acquire *experience*; which strictly and properly means, *knowledge derived from practice.* Every doctrine, principle, and rule of religion, being of a practical nature, may therefore come within our experience; but then only can we be said to have had experience of *any* doctrine, principle, or rule, when we have applied it to our practice, and have thus acquired a knowledge and conviction of its efficacy. We may obtain knowledge by other

means; but till we have practised what we know, we cannot know it by experience; and *no one can have religious experience any further, than he makes the doctrines and precepts of religion the rules of his temper, affections, and conduct.* These appear to me to be very obvious and important truths; and truths which, acknowledged, and followed into their consequences, will correct some very erroneous ideas upon the subject.

It must be evident, from the difference of natural capacities and dispositions, of educations, of conditions, and of the various circumstances of our lives, that there must be different degrees of this experience; differences in its operations, its appearances, and its expressions, even where it will be admitted that it is actually possessed. One is ignorant, and can no more form the clear and strong conceptions of the doctrines and duties of religion, which are formed by some others, than a man who is short sighted can see clearly the distant prospect, which another, who has not this defect, can see plainly. One is ardent and sanguine, and always speaking and acting immediately from the impressions of the moment. He kindles at every new excitement; and his experience, if often delightful, is frequently contradictory. Another is cool and deliberate; but his experience, though less imposing, is perhaps as much more uniform, as his convictions are more deeply settled. One has a tendency in his constitution to melancholy, which often clouds his happiest sensa-

tions, and casts a gloom over his brightest hopes; and another is always cheerful, and enjoys more, even under the pressure of many adversities, than do many who are subject to depression of spirits, in their most favored moments. One practises religion and virtue, amidst all the privations and discouragements of poverty; and another has little experience of their influence, but what he has obtained in the most prosperous circumstances. Some having been indulged with every advantage of a pious education, from their childhood have walked with God; and others, who have been reared in impiety and vice, have been reformed, and brought to the holiness of the gospel. Some are naturally irritable and impetuous in their tempers, and others, gentle and forbearing. Even supposing all these persons to have precisely the same religious sentiments, how different must be their temptations, their trials, the operations of their minds, their *experience?* From the peculiarities of their natural constitutions, and the difference of their conditions, we might, and ought, to expect that one will be suddenly, and another very gradually affected with religion; that one will be made by it as happy as he can be in this world, while another, perhaps at least equally pious, may scarcely dare to raise even his eyes to heaven. One will be most deeply interested in certain doctrines, and another in others. One will feel *every day*, what another feels only *occasionally*; and one will experience *rapture*, where an-

other will feel only *fear*, and *care*, and *dejection*. With one, nothing will be accounted experience, which is not *remarkable*; and another will account the *serene* and *peaceful* state of the mind, which is felt in a recurrence to a day of calm, but steady pursuit of ordinary duties, to be far the most valuable experience, because it exposes less to temptations, to reverses, and to sorrows. But various as may be the kinds and degrees of it, I know of no safer rule, in forming our judgments upon the question, "is mine the experience which the gospel approves, and which I may believe to be the genuine fruit of religion?" than seriously to consider, *whether ours are indeed christian principles, and whether the principles which we receive, and by which we profess to be actuated, have been faithful-*

ly applied to our practice? As we are liable to deception in our principles, and motives, and feelings, we may of course be deceived in our experience; and attribute it to religion, when it has in fact another, and a very different origin. But let it be remembered, that as religious experience is the fruit of the principles of the gospel faithfully applied, so the fruit of genuine christian experience, will be increasing fidelity. Have you, reader, this evidence that you are born of God? I rejoice in your possession of it. But let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall; for not only must we *have*, but we must *retain* the spirit of Christ, or *we are none of his*.

[To some mistakes on this subject, we may ask attention in a future number.]

THOUGHTS ON THE MEDIATION OF THE SON OF GOD,
Corresponding with "*Butler's Analogy*."

Resumed and concluded from p. 113.

It would be easy to mention many more, of judges, of kings, of prophets, and of priests, who acted the part of mediators, and on whose account special favors were bestowed on the wicked people in Israel. Indeed, in every instance in which favor was shown to the nation in answer to prayer, we have an instance of mediation.

In reply to the intercession of Abraham for the people of Sodom, God assured him, that if there should be found ten righteous persons in the city, he

would spare it for the *ten's sake*. This shows the regard which God has to righteous characters, and of what importance they are to the safety of a city or a nation; and that it is consistent with the principles of divine government, to bestow favor on the wicked, from regard to the righteous. Had there been but *ten* righteous persons in Sodom, they would have been mediators of sufficient efficacy to save the city from the impending storm. And although there was but one, yet so long as he remained in

the city, he stood between the devoted inhabitants and death. The angel said unto Lot, "Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither." Elijah and Elisha were such powerful mediators, that they were represented as the defence of the nation, "the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

In Ezek. xiv. 14, we have something pertinent to the present purpose. In threatening to bring judgments on the land of Israel, God said to the prophet, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness." This is repeated again and again. While this passage with great plainness and solemnity announces, that the mediation of these three eminent saints would be unavailing in that particular case, it as plainly implies, that it had been common with God, in *other* cases, to spare a guilty people through the mediation of such men. Had it not been consistent in any case, to show mercy to the guilty on account of such righteous men, why were they thus brought to view on that occasion?

In Jer. xv. 1, we have a passage of similar import. "Then said the Lord unto me, though Moses and Samuel stood before me, my mind could not be towards this people." In former times Moses and Samuel had been two of the most powerful mediators that had been known in Israel. Each of them in his turn had stood singly before

God, and prevailed in supplicating mercy for that nation. But in the days of Jeremiah, the people had become so corrupt and wicked, that even both of these prophets together would not have been sufficient to turn away the anger of Jehovah, or secure the nation from the approaching calamity.

Thus it appears, that for some reason God has seen fit to accept of this lower kind of mediation. In numerous instances he suspended calamities, lengthened out the day of grace, and bestowed mercy, through the mediation of individuals eminent for piety and virtue. We may then ask, what objection can be stated against the supposed mediation of the Son of God, which will not be of equal force against the mediation of Moses, or any of the saints who have been named? If it were not inconsistent with the freeness of divine mercy, to bestow temporal salvation through the mediation of Moses and others, why should it be thought inconsistent or dishonorable for God, to bestow eternal salvation on penitent sinners, through the mediation of his own Son? If I remember correctly, Mr. T. Paine, in his letter to Mr. Samuel Adams, thought it to be absurd, to suppose that prayer could be of any avail to procure favors from the hand of God. But why? Probably he thought to bestow favors in answer to prayer, was inconsistent with the freeness of divine mercy; and that it was an idea dishonorable to God, to suppose supplication to be necessary. God, he would have

said, needs no importunity; his mercy is too free to be procured by entreaty. Perhaps also some of the Israelites thought it would have been more to the honor of God, had he bestowed his favors on that people without the tedious round of sacrifices, and sin offerings, and without regard to the prayers of Moses, Samuel, and others. But such, we may believe, were not the views and feelings of the pious people, who had more confidence in the wisdom of Jehovah, than they had in their own contracted understandings. At the present day there may be many, who think it would be a much greater display of divine mercy, if God would bestow pardon and salvation on the wicked, without requiring *repentance* as a condition of forgiveness.

Indeed, if we allow ourselves to set up our own wisdom, as the standard by which the conduct of Jehovah should be regulated, it will be easy to find objections against every branch of the Divine administration. How natural it would be to impeach the goodness of God, in subjecting mankind to the necessity of obtaining the bread by the sweat of their brow, when it would be so easy with him, to supply all their wants by miracles! How readily should we deny the perfection of his government, on account of the sin and misery which actually exists in the world he has made! If we are unable to see, why it was *impossible* or *improper*, that moral and natural evil should be absolutely excluded from the universe by the constitution of nature

or providence, shall we presume to be judges of what is necessary or proper for the recovery and salvation of sinful men!

There had been a long succession of typical sacrifices for sin, and typical mediators; "But now once in the end of the world Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."—"How, and in what way," says Dr. Butler, "it had its efficacy, there are not wanting persons, who have endeavoured to explain; but I do not find that the scripture has explained it." In this remark I perfectly acquiesce. The many explanations which have been given, have evinced nothing more clearly, than the folly of attempting to explain what God has thought fit to conceal. With sincerity I can say, I do not find that the scripture has explained "how or in what way" the sacrifice of the Son of God has its efficacy. But I can say the same in regard to all the sacrifices of the Mosaic dispensation; the same of all the typical mediations, and the same in respect to the efficacy of prayer. Must I therefore sit in judgment on the Divine conduct, deny the propriety and utility of his institutions? Or may I pretend to explain what God hath kept secret, or profess to be wise above what is written? Is it not a more modest and safe course, to confide in the wisdom of God respecting his appointments; to perform faithfully the duties which he has enjoined; to leave unexplained those reasons for his conduct, which his wisdom has kept hid from our view; and by patient

continuance in well doing, "wait for his Son from heaven?"—"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him shall he appear a second time without sin unto salvation."

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT. SECT. III.

AFTER the death of Luther, the Council proceeded to examine his opinions. The first list related to his views of the *scriptures* and *traditions*. From the Lutheran books they stated the following articles.

1. "That the necessary doctrine of Christian faith is wholly contained in the holy scripture, and that it is a human invention to *add* to them *unwritten traditions*."

2. "That of the books of the Old Testament, none should be reckoned but those which have been received by the Jews." By the same article it also appears that the Lutherans doubted the genuineness of the Epistle to the Hebrews—that of James—the second Epistle of Peter—the second and third of John—that of Jude, and the Apocalypse.

3. "That to understand the scriptures well, or to allege the proper words, it is necessary to have recourse to the texts in the original tongue in which they were written, and to reprove the Latin translation as full of errors."

4. "That the divine scripture is most easy and perspicuous, and that to understand it, neither gloss nor comment is necessary, but only to have the spirit of a sheep of Christ's pasture."

To these the Council subjoined a 5th article for discussion,

which was this:—"Whether Canons, with anathematisms adjoined, should be framed against all these articles."

"Upon the two first, the divines discoursed in four congregations; and in the first, all agreed that the christian faith is contained partly in the *scriptures* and partly in *traditions*." It was judged that the *scriptures* and the *traditions* were of equal authority. The major part of the Council said, that it was necessary to account that translation which formerly had been read in the churches, and used in the schools as *divine* and *authentic*, otherwise they should yield the cause to the Lutherans, and open a gate to innumerable *heresies* hereafter. Some curious reasons were offered in support of this opinion; one was this—"that if the providence of God has given an authentic scripture to the Jews, and an authentic New Testament to the Greeks, it cannot be said without derogation that the church of Rome, *more beloved than the rest*, hath been destitute of this great benefit; and therefore that the same Holy Ghost, who dictated the holy books, dictated also that *translation*, which ought to be accepted by the church of Rome."

A dispute arose respecting the liberty to be allowed in explain-

ing the scriptures. Some supposed that divines of that age ought not to be confined to the interpretations which had been given by the ancient doctors of the church; but that each one had a right to employ his own talents in giving the sense of scripture; and to prohibit this would be spiritual tyranny. Those of the contrary opinion said, that popular license would be worse than tyranny, that it was best to curb the unbridled wits, otherwise they could not hope to see an end to the present contentions. One of the Council gave it as his opinion, that the doctrines of faith were now so cleared, "that they ought no more to learn them out of the scriptures." Another said that the understanding of the scriptures must be *fitted to the times* and expounded according to the *current rites*. But Cardinal Paccoco said, "that the scriptures had been expounded by so many and so excellent men in goodness and learning, that there was no hope to add any good thing more; that all the *new heresies* sprang from the *new expositions of scripture*, and therefore it was best to bridle the sauciness of modern wits, and make them content to be governed by the ancients." To this the council generally consented.

After spending much time on the preceding articles, they came to that respecting *Anathemas*. It was supposed that to make decrees without subjoining anathemas against dissenters, was about equal to making no decree of faith at all. Still it was thought too rigorous to pronounce

an anathema against every man who might in some particular dissent from the vulgar translation. On the whole, they concluded to form two decrees; the first was to embrace the catalogue of books to be deemed canonical, and the *traditions*. This decree was to conclude with an *anathema*. The second decree was "to comprehend the translation and the sense of scripture, as if the decree were a remedy against the abuse of so many interpretations and impertinent expositions." By this Council the Apocryphal books were placed on a level with those of the Old Testament and the New.

On the 8th of April, 1546, which was forty-one days from the time of Luther's death, the Council published the preconcerted decrees. The substance of the decrees as given by Father Paul may be thus stated.

First. "Aiming to preserve the purity of the gospel which was promised by the prophets, published by Christ, and preached by the apostles as the fountain of all truth, and discipline of manners—which truth and discipline are contained in the *books*, and *unwritten traditions*, received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ, and dictated to them by the Holy Ghost, and passed from one to another; the Synod doth, according to the example of the Fathers, receive with equal reverence all the books of the Old Testament and the New, and the traditions belonging to faith and manners, as proceeding from the mouth of Christ, or dictated by the Holy

Spirit and preserved in the Catholic church." After naming the several books, the decree concludes thus—"that if any will not receive them all as sacred and canonical in all parts, as they are read in the Catholic church, and contained in the vulgar edition, or shall wittingly and purposely despise the traditions, *let him be anathema.*"

Second. "That the vulgar edition shall be held for authentic in public lectures, disputations, sermons, and expositions, and none shall dare to refuse it. That the holy scriptures cannot be expounded against the sense held by the holy mother, the church; nor against the common consent of the fathers, though with purpose to conceal those expositions; and that the offenders shall be punished by the ordinaries. That the vulgar edition should be most exactly printed. That no books of religion be printed, sold, or kept, without the author's name, and that the approbation appear in the frontispiece of the book, upon the pain of excommunication and pecuniary punishment."

The remaining part of the second decree relates to a profane use of the language of the scriptures.

It may be useful for christians in this country to reflect on the kindness of God to us, in so or-

dering events, that we are free from the spiritual dominion which the Council of Trent attempted to establish. That Council had doubtless as good a right to decree articles of faith, and to bind the consciences of men, as any Council or any class of ministers in ancient or modern times. But had it been in their power to carry their decrees into effect, what would now have been our condition! The work of reformation would have been immediately suspended, the *errors* and the *darkness* of that Council would have been established for *truth* and *light* in every part of christendom! While we reflect with gratitude on our escape from papal tyranny, let us stand fast in the liberty of the gospel; and neither submit to chains which others may forge for us, nor make fetters for others, nor for ourselves, nor for our posterity. Let there be no Cardinal Paccoco among us, who shall have the folly or the effrontery to say, "that the scriptures have been expounded by so many and so excellent men in goodness and learning, that there is no hope to add any good thing more; that all the new heresies spring from the new expositions of scripture, and therefore it is best to bridle the sauciness of modern wits, and make them content to be governed by the ancients."

DEFENCE OF THE LETTER FROM ONE CLERGYMAN TO ANOTHER;

In reply to Minimus.

For the Christian Disciple.

SIR,

FROM a conviction that your
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sentiment was the occasion of
uncharitableness, I was first led

to examine its correctness. It is not my wish to wound your feelings; but as your answer has failed of convincing me, you will suffer me to reply. It will not be needful that I should remark on every thing in your answer. As the answer rests on one principle, if I can show *that* to be incorrect, the things which rest upon it will fall of course. The principle is concisely this; that a person may really *appear* to himself as the chief of sinners, while he *sees reason to believe* he is not. This you illustrate thus, "the pain of a person in distress may *appear* to him greater than that of any other person; while at the same time he sees reason to *believe*, that the pains of others are greater than his own."

This principle is, I believe, founded in misapprehension, and by blending things together, which ought to be separately viewed. "The pains of a person in distress" may be such, as to lead him inconsiderately to say, no other person ever endured pain so great as mine; but a moment's reflection may convince him of the contrary; and when "he *sees the evidence to believe*," that the pains of others have been greater than his own, it ceases to *appear* to him that his own are the greatest of all. At one time a person's attention is so fixed on his own *sins* or his own *pains*, that he makes no proper comparison between his state and that of others; then it is that his own seem the greatest; but, during this time, he does not "*see evidence to believe*" the contrary. When that evidence is clearly

seen, it corrects the misapprehension.

It may also be observed, that a good person feels his own guilt, and his own pains, in such a *manner*, as it is impossible he should feel the guilt and pains of any other person. He feels them as *his own*; and this *peculiar feeling* may give rise to the incorrect and improper language which is adopted in both cases.

I admit, that "the heart forms the character;" that a christian has more access to his own heart than to the hearts of others; that "no one can tell how much light another sins against," &c. but I do not admit, that it hence follows, that "every christian in the exercise of humility must *appear* to himself the chief of sinners." Let the christian "in the exercise of humility" spend an evening in company with the ungodly, and hear them uttering the most horrid blasphemies against God, against Jesus Christ and his religion, and wishing damnation to all his followers. Will this christian "*appear* to himself" the vilest monster in the company? Will he say, of all hearts mine is still the most wicked? Will he not rather fall before God, and adore that goodness which made him to differ, which gave him a heart to love and admire what others blaspheme?

In answer to my first objection you say, "It is not maintained that humility leads people in all instances to *believe*, that their hearts are worse than the hearts of others; but to view them as *appearing* worse." But if hu-

mility be of such a deluding tendency, as to make things "*appear*" to us contrary to what we "*see reason to believe*" they really are, what disease of the mind could be more calculated to lead us to call good evil, and evil good, to put darkness for light, and light for darkness?

My second objection was—"If it were habitual with christians to entertain such views of themselves, it would be impossible for them to make a profession of religion in *sincerity* and *uprightness*." To this you answer—"This objection would be well founded, if it were maintained that christians view their hearts *at all times* worse than the hearts of all others; but this" you say, "is not maintained." It is however maintained that "every christian in the *exercise of humility* must *appear* to himself the chief of sinners." Does it not then clearly follow from what you have *admitted*, and what you have *asserted*, that "to make a profession of religion in *sincerity* and *uprightness*," the christian must take an opportunity to do it when he is *not* "in the exercise of humility?"

It is granted that, "as christians have some sinful exercises of heart, so they have some holy exercises of heart, which are totally different from all the feelings and affections of the impenitent, and afford evidence that they have been born of the spirit, and are qualified to own Christ before men." But does not this "evidence," resulting from "holy affection," make it "*appear*" to the saint, that there is something better in his heart,

than there was formerly, or than there now is in the hearts of "the impenitent?" While he has this evidence of a *renewed heart*, does his own heart still appear the vilest of all? If it be the nature of humility to make a person "*appear to himself*" the vilest of all creatures, must it not follow, that the more humble a person is, the more vile he will "*appear*" to himself to be; and the more unfit to profess religion? As it is only while "in the exercise of humility" that a person resembles Christ, will it not follow from your hypothesis, that the more a person resembles the Lord Jesus, the viler his own heart will appear to him; that the more goodness he really has in his heart, the more wicked it must "*appear to himself*?" Unless, then, he infers from his heart's "*appearing*" to him the vilest of all hearts, that it is *not* so in *reality*, how can he profess friendship to Christ, without acting in direct contradiction to his own views of himself? Must he not act on the evidence he has "*to believe*," that his *humility* has occasioned his heart to "*appear*" much worse than it really is?

I have no wish to have christians think of themselves otherwise than "soberly, as they ought to think." We have all abundant reason to lie low before God. I am not afraid that christians will be, or "*appear*" to be, too humble? My fear is, that they will offend God, and dishonor religion, by an inconsiderate use of customary language, and saying things which will not bear examination. There

is one view of the subject which I cannot omit to state, although I must state it with reluctance. It is this:—when it is the *fashion* for christians to use the language in question, and when it is generally understood by them, that “every christian in the exercise of humility must *appear* to himself as the chief of sinners,” and that his heart must “*appear*” to him the most wicked of all hearts; what, under these circumstances, is the *import* of the language? Is it not plainly this, “*I am a humble christian?*” If it be the known opinion of him who uses the language, that it is *humility of heart* which leads to it, I do not see how the conclusion can be avoided, that his saying, “*I appear* to myself the vilest sinner in the world,” is equivalent to saying, “*I am a very humble christian.*”

I doubt not, however, that in times of darkness and depression, real christians may use such language in sincerity, without any consideration of its being supposed to import a humble mind. But I am unable to see on what ground a person can be justified in using such language, while he “*sees reason to believe*” the contrary.

It is pretty evident that your theory, and my objections to it, have led you to suppose you have evidence that I have never been “truly convinced of sin and humbled for it.” Let me then bring your principle to the test. While you infer from my objections that I am destitute of humility, you probably infer that you have “evidence to *believe*” that my heart is really worse than yours. Now which heart “*appears*” to you the most vile, *yours*, or *mine*? Does not my heart “*appear*” to you as much worse than yours, as you “*see reason to believe*” it really is? Does it not “*appear*” to you just according to your *belief* respecting it? Is not the principle, then, on which your answer rests, evidently grounded in misapprehension?

Should you write again, be pleased to inform me how you go to work, to make things “*appear*” to yourself the reverse of what you “*see evidence to believe*” they really are; and also assign a reason, why there is not as much danger in *believing*, that there are others more vile than yourself, as there would be in its *appearing* so to your own mind.

A COUNTRY CLERGYMAN.

PARABLE OF THE FOUR CITIZENS.

A, B, C, and D, live under the same government. They severally profess the highest regard for the Governor, for the constitution and laws of the state. The constitution contains the general doctrines and principles of government, and pre-

scribes the qualifications and powers of the Chief Magistrate. The laws of the state explicitly prohibit murder, robbery, defamation, &c. and secure to each citizen the rights of conscience and the liberty of speech. Some passages in the constitution were

capable of being construed in different senses, and these different constructions implied different ideas as to the qualifications and powers of the Governor. A and B differed in explaining some articles of the constitution; each thought his own opinion most honorable to the Governor, and most safe for the community. By altercation they became alienated; and each accused the other of being an enemy to the Governor and to the constitution, and by the heat of controversy they were both led to direct violations of the laws of the state in their conduct one towards the other; but these violations of the law each one justified in himself by his regard to the Governor and the constitution.

C and D were witnesses of the violent debate, and were both grieved in view of the folly with which it was conducted.

They also disagreed in their opinions on the disputed passages. C was in opinion with A, and D with B. They mutually endeavoured to convince each other, but their debates were ever conducted with friendship. Each felt his own fallibility, and was willing to allow his neighbour the same right of private judgment which he claimed for himself. To be obedient to the laws and keep the peace, they believed to be more honorable to the Governor, beneficial to the community, and safe for themselves, than to quarrel about the disputed passages in the constitution. For they had often heard that it was very pleasing to His Excellency to have the citizens live in love and harmony; and they could not learn that he had ever promised any reward for people's abusing one another to express their love to him.

THE TEST OF SCHISMATIC TEACHING.

OUR Saviour affectionately prayed for his disciples, that they all might be *one, even as he and the Father are one*. Paul exhorted the christians in Rome to "mark those who cause *divisions*," that is *schisms* in the family of Christ. It must therefore be the duty of every minister of the gospel seriously to inquire, *what is schismatic teaching?* To this inquiry Dr. Campbell replies, "The test to which scripture points us is, does the teaching in question alienate the hearts of christians or unite

them? Does it conciliate the affections where differences have unhappily arisen? Or does it widen the breach? If the former, the spirit is christian; if the latter, schismatical." *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*. p. 98.

If the Doctor's observations are just, as we verily believe they are, is it not evident that too much of the teaching of the present day is strictly of a schismatic character? Is it not calculated to alienate the hearts of christians from each other,

rather than to unite them in that love, which is "the END of the commandment," the "BOND of perfectness," the ESSENCE of

religion, and the FOUNDATION of happiness in this world, and in the world to come?

Illustrations of passages in the New Testament, which refer to sentiments, &c. of the Jews, in the time of our Saviour.

31.

John i. 31. "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*"

THE expressions, *verily, verily*; or, as they might have been rendered, *amen, amen*; at the beginning of a discourse, appear to have been peculiar to our Lord. It is to be remarked also, that neither of the other evangelists represent our Lord as having repeated the word *amen* in this manner; though they give examples of a similar use of it. With the greatest diffidence would I suggest the conjecture, that the other gospels having been written peculiarly for Jews, who, from their acquaintance with it, would feel the full force of the word, it was used in them singly; but John, in writing peculiarly for Gentiles, for men to whom it was not so familiar, adopted the double form of expression, to convey to their minds the full import of the assurances of our Lord. The word means *true; confirmed; worthy of faith*. "The promises of God in him, (in our Lord,) are *amen*;" 2 Cor. i. 20; that is, they cannot fail of accomplishment. "Thus saith the *Amen*," Rev. iii. 14, is explained by thus saith "*the faithful and true*

witness." In the beginning of a sentence, it is a strong assertion; and repeated as it here is, it amounts to a most solemn assurance. In the end of an address, it expresses approbation, or desire; and implies, "so I wish," or "so may it be to me."

In the synagogue, *amen* was said by the people, at the conclusion of the prayers by the minister; and at home, in the benediction or the prayer of a father of a family. But it was never used in the public prayers of the temple; and seldom, if ever, was subjoined to private worship.

It is probable that our Lord, in these expressions, intended to contrast what he taught, with the false doctrines of the Jewish teachers.

The expressions, "*hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man,*" are an obvious allusion to the vision of Jacob, Genesis xxviii. 12. "He dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending, and descending upon it." In the sentiments of the ancient Jews concerning angels, I do not, however, find any thing, which will assist us in the interpretation of this

promise of our Saviour; and if we look into the gospels, we do not find either Philip or Nathaniel, to whom it was addressed, to have been present at the transfiguration, or at any appearance of the angels at the sepulchre. But Maimonides distinguishes "two sorts of prophetic parables; in one of which, *every word* has some peculiar meaning; and in the other, *the whole parable* represents the thing intended, but every word has not equal weight; some being added only for the sake of elegance. Among the first sort, he says, is the vision of Jacob, "The ladder may be thought to represent the divine providence, which governs all things; and which now particularly directed Jacob in his journey, every step of which was under the guidance of God. The angels which went up and down signify, that they are the great ministers of God's providence; and that they are always in motion to serve those, who serve God faithfully." We might compare with this exposition the expressions of the Psalmist, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them;" (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) & those of the apostle to the Hebrews, when speaking of angels, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation." (Heb. i. 14.) And if this be a right interpretation of the vision of the patriarch; or if it was intended to be an exhibition to his mind of the providence of God; may we not suppose the expressions of our Lord to refer to the same providence,

in the final developement of which his disciples should at once witness and enjoy his triumph, as the Messiah, the Saviour of the world? Philip and Nathaniel acknowledged him, while he was without riches, without power, and without any apparent means of obtaining the sovereignty, which they believed would be possessed by the Messiah; and the immediate occasion of this promise appears to have been, Nathaniel's acknowledgment of our Lord, after Jesus had said to him, "before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. What was the peculiarity of this circumstance to which our Lord alludes, and which so much affected the mind of this early, and ingenuous disciple, it is impossible now to know; but I can hardly doubt, that it was with reference to the great final manifestation of the purposes of divine providence, to be accomplished by the Messiah, and which is to be made at the termination of the christian dispensation, that our Lord uttered this promise. If this be true, the import of his words is, "because I said unto thee, 'I saw thee under the fig-tree,' believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see that I am the Messiah, by other and far more illustrious displays of the providence of God concerning me. The time will come, when ye shall see that every circumstance, relating to the Messiah, and to his kingdom, has been under the immediate

care and guidance of God. Ye shall see me invested with power from on high, to fulfil all which God has promised to do, for the salvation of mankind. As the angels ascending and descending upon Jacob's ladder, represented to his mind, that every step of his journey was directed by God, and that all which was promised to him would be accomplished, so shall ye see that every step of the Messiah is under the guidance of the same infinite wisdom; and that all which God has promised by him, will in me be accomplished."—Whitby, on the text, refers these expressions to the miracles of our Lord; and Spencer supposes them probably to have been accomplished, in some manifestation of the glory of Christ as the Messiah, which is not mentioned by the evangelists. But to me they seem to refer to that final development of the plans of God in the mission of our Saviour, to which all christians may look, equally as these primitive disciples; and that it was spoken and recorded, as well for ours,

as for their consolation and encouragement.

It is worthy of remark, that our Lord's approbation of Nathaniel, and this promise which he addressed to him, were in consequence of his acknowledgment, "*rabbi, thou art the Son of God;—thou art the king of Israel.*" In this confession appears to have been comprehended all, which was required of the first disciples, preparatory to their admission into the family, and the church of our Lord.

There has been much idle, and presumptuous speculation, on the subject of angels; and some, with great confidence, have settled the questions, when were they created? and what is their number? Much is said of their agency in the scriptures, both of the old and the New Testament; and any of our readers who would inquire on the subject, we refer to the *Edinburg, Encyclopedia*.—art. angel. *Calmet's Dict.* on the same. *Broughton's Hist. of Relig.* on the same. *Simpson's Essays on scripture language*, essay 4th. *Lightfoot's Hor. Heb.* see *angeli* in the index.

MELANCTHON'S ADVICE TO HIS MOTHER.

PHILIP MELANCTHON was one of the celebrated Reformers, and a man of a mild and amiable temper. When he went to a conference at Spire, he made a little journey to visit his mother. The good woman asked him what she must believe amidst so many disputes, and repeated to him her prayers, which

contained nothing superstitious. "Go on, mother," said he, "to believe and pray as you have done, and never trouble yourself about controversies." "This," says Bishop Horne, "is the advice of a wise and good man." In many cases such advice would be unquestionably good.

It is probably a fact, that com-

mon christians are much less divided in their real opinions on religious subjects, than the clergy; and that they would display much more of the christian temper towards each other, were it not for the prepossessions actually produced by those, whose business it should be to cultivate love, union, and harmony among the professed disciples of Jesus. It is difficult to conceive on what ground a minister of the gospel can expect the divine approbation, who employs his influence to prepossess the minds of one sect of christians against another. The plea for such conduct is this:—It is the duty of a min-

ister to guard his people against error. But can it be his duty to produce error in temper, as a defence against error in opinion? It is believed that no possible error in opinion can be more dangerous to the souls of men, than that bitter spirit which is often discoverable in professors of one sect towards those of other denominations. Yet this unchristian spirit is but the genuine fruit of uncharitable and censorious preaching. We do not however suppose that such preaching is confined to any one sect, and we fear that there is no sect whose ministers can all plead "*not guilty.*"

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DENYING OUR CONSTITUTIONAL PROPENSITIES.

It is one remarkable character of evangelical morality, that the virtues which it most frequently recommends, and on which it most strenuously insists, are those, which, though at first the most repugnant to our inclinations, appear upon more impartial examination to be the most important of any to the happiness of individuals and of society. I cannot produce two instances more to my purpose, than the precepts of forgiveness and of self-denial. Nothing more violently counteracts the whole torrent of human passions, and nothing is more furiously resisted by all the energy of an unsubdued spirit, than the commandment which requires us to forgive the man who has most sensibly injured us. Yet no one, in his cooler moments, will deny

the utter inutility of revenge, the evils which must flow from its unlimited permission, or the remorse which the most successful violation of this precept infallibly awakens after passion has subsided. The duty of *self-denial* seems at first equally rigorous and impracticable, and will appear on reflection, equally just and salutary.

By self-denial we mean something more than that petty restraint, which is sometimes dignified with the name, which consists only in giving up what we can no longer hold, in avoiding an excess which injures our health, in curtailing an expense which would soon impoverish us, in relinquishing a vice which begins to grow unfashionable, or in breaking off one habit to replace it by another. These may be

called sacrifices by those who have never made any others; but they are the offerings of the maimed, the sick, the untimely, the worthless upon the altar of self-love. No! the christian law of self-denial extends through the whole of our terrestrial existence, reaches to the recesses of the disposition, embraces the whole of the character. It extends no less to what is essential than to what is superfluous, to what is grand than to what is minute. To apply and to illustrate this precept in all its relations would be an inexhaustible theme. In the following remarks, I shall confine myself to one view of the subject, which, though in truth the most extensive and various, is perhaps the least frequently considered. I propose to consider the necessity of counteracting, or at least of repressing and restraining what are called our *constitutional propensities*, or in other words, the *natural disposition*.

By this language, I mean not to assert that we are born with hereditary instincts, or that any man is from his cradle under the influence of passions which he cannot resist. I mean only that every man possesses what may be called a constitutional temperament, which forms the ground work of his character, which distinguishes his virtues and his vices from the same virtues and vices in any other, which affects all the other causes which help to form his character, and which, through the whole of life, constitutes what may be called his distinguishing cast of mind. I mean, not what

is significantly called our ruling passion, for that is usually generated or acquired; but I mean that native humor of the soul, which may sometimes cooperate with, and sometimes counteract our most inveterate passions, and most favorite pursuits. Thus one man is born with an excessive irritability of humor, another is more placid and unsusceptible. This man's temperament is melancholick, another's sanguine; one appears to possess a native timidity of spirit, another is fearless and presumptuous. Some are subject to a constitutional indolence, others to a restless activity; some are inclined to be sociable, others are fond of retirement; some discover an insatiable curiosity of temper, some a native fickleness of humor, mingled with a thirst for novelty or singularity; and all may detect in themselves a thousand sympathies and antipathies for which they find it impossible to account. Now the most important, though perhaps the least studied part of self-denial, is to endeavour to understand and counteract these original biasses. It may be safely laid down as an axiom, that, in general, no great perfection of virtue can be expected in any character which is under the sway of its constitutional humor.

It will be easy to show that our constitutional propensities expose us to our most dangerous temptations. It is indeed true, that a man's native turn of mind is in itself perfectly indifferent, or void of any moral quality; it is only in consequence of the

dangerous indulgence he grants it, that it becomes morally depraved. Neither, when I say that a man's temperament exposes him to his most dangerous temptations, do I mean that it is universally a source of temptation and nothing else. It not unfrequently happens that the only excellencies of some characters are those which appear to be relies of what may be called the natural disposition, and in applying the means of moral regeneration, the temper may sometimes aid as well as resist the influence of the grace of God. A soul, sanguine and tender and sensible, like that of Peter, may be saved by a single look of love and sorrow; but on the other hand, the kisses and the tears of Jesus could not melt the hard and savage heart of the traitor. Who does not perceive, that the attractions of sin gain their principal force by meeting with a disposition half willing to be led. We talk much of the fatal contagion of bad example. We deplore in melancholy strains the corruption of the age in which we live. The world we say is full of dazzling temptations; pleasure meets us at every turn in various forms of seductive elegance, and the Syrens are singing all around us. To excuse ourselves, we talk much of the influence of fashion, the sway of opinion; we exaggerate the charms of gaiety and show, of feasts and spectacles; we suggest the operation of evil spirits, and from the self-justifying humor of some people, one of the fallen angels is always compelled to bear all the blame of their sins, besides the trouble of sug-

gesting the temptation. But what man falls into transgression who is not willing to be seduced? Men know enough of one another to understand that to gain a favor of a capricious superior, or to obtain a concession, or to gain a point, the surest method is to know what is a man's foible, and to flatter it; consult but the turn of his mind, and study the cast of his character, and you have all that you can want. And do you think that sin, who for so many thousand years, has been practising the arts of seduction, has yet to learn that you are not to be tempted against your will? When any man has not learned to deny his favorite propensities, and cannot contend against himself, she well knows that her conquests are already secured.

Here is a man irritable and delicate in all his feelings. He finds himself, as he imagines, perpetually exposed to insults and affronts. Hardly is the remembrance of an injury closed up, ere the wound is torn open afresh; every thing, with which he comes in contact, stimulates him to resent and to revenge. He thinks no one is so unreasonably, so grossly persecuted as himself, and his mind is wrought up to resolutions of the most desperate character. Yet this man, with all his morbid sensibility, is not exposed to more temptations than his placid and less suspicious neighbour, though such is the texture of his fibre, that he is blistered all over with affronts, while the other, in the same element, is cool and insensible.

The tempter, if he finds a man

of a melancholick complexion, presents every object to him discolored and woeful. He can see nothing around him but symptoms of unhappiness. The usual forms of common civility appear to him but indications of treachery, nothing strikes him in the conduct of mankind but selfishness and degeneracy. Every event as it arises, appears to him but the precursor of one more dark and dreadful, and thus he sinks from suspicion to distrust, and from distrust to misanthropy, and thus through all the grades of the unsocial affections, to malignity, hatred, doubt, atheism, madness, suicide!

Another's temperament is sanguine. Every thing appears to him bright and glistening. The first suggestions of pleasure whirl him away. He is intoxicated by every draught which he takes of the cup of delight, and finds himself involved in crimes when he was perhaps seeking only for fame or improvement, or at worst for enjoyment. The timid, and gentle, and yielding spirits sin because they are unable to resist. They perpetually find themselves in delicate situations, in tempting exigencies, from which they have not the least resolution to escape. Diffident of their own judgment, they are relieved to have another take them by the hand and lead them. The scorn of the world, the neglect even of the unworthy, the fear of making themselves observed, tempt them to the most dangerous concessions and conformities. They give themselves up to vice, without any attachment to it; and lest

they should displease those they love, consent to hate themselves and to endure the most harrowing reproaches of their own consciences. Every example tempts, every assiduity wins, every prayer melts them, and every different suggestion makes them distrust their own understanding.

Another is subject to a constitutional indolence of temper, which persuades him to embrace any alternative which promises to spare him labor. He yields because he cannot summon resolution enough to inquire why he should resist. A secret languor oppresses him, which he seeks to relieve by sinking into and covering himself all over in a bed of delicacies and indulgences, where he lies and opens his eyes only to discover the difficulties and the pains of virtuous exertion.

The social humor of one man engages him insensibly in dissipation; the solitary pride of another keeps him in perpetual jealousy of those that appear happier than himself, and cherishes a secret envy which degenerates into malignity, or operates in oblique and petty mischief.

The disposition to be caught with novelty, generates a fickleness and indecision of mind which effectually prevents the permanent establishment of important principles of conduct, as well as the formation of virtuous habits of action. Such a man, it is true, can never be completely corrupt; but sin is delighted to find a man of this character, whose resolution she can always warp from its present purpose, whose pursuits she can always

change by suggesting a new one, whose eye she can always dazzle, whose ear she can always detain, at least, for a moment, and in whose mind new sympathies and antipathies can be suddenly awakened, which shall effectually countervail the temporary progress which he is making in any particular virtue.

The caprice too of singularity is another of those native biasses which leads into the most dangerous absurdities. In men of genius especially, it tempts them sometimes like Rousseau, to defend the most destructive paradoxes, and like Hume to bewilder the most illustrious truths,

or like the founders of most sects in religion, to carry doctrines to extremes, and to exult in the independence of their heresy, or in the rashness of their scepticism.

All these different casts of temper, if not perpetually guarded, observed, counteracted, will spread from a little point over the whole soul, and color all its faculties. What was at first our foible becomes our character. What perhaps was beneficial in its moderate and early influence, becomes at last intolerable to others, and destructive to ourselves. How necessary then is it to guard and restrain our constitutional propensities!

ADMONITORY HINTS.

IN the Christian Observer for January, 1813, we have a "Review of a New Directory for Nonconformist Churches," from which it appears that some respectable clergymen among the dissenters had become disposed to adopt precomposed forms of prayer in public worship; and that they had published a work expressive of their wishes, in which they assigned reasons for the proposed change. Among these reasons they mention *defects* and *improprieties* which too often accompany extemporary prayer. However reluctant we should be to having the clergy in this country confined to precomposed forms of prayer, we are very willing that defects and improprieties should be corrected, which too commonly attend our usual modes of public worship. For this reason we shall

briefly quote some things mentioned by the dissenting clergymen. We wish our readers to understand, that the passages to be quoted are not the remarks of an Episcopal Reviewer, but what the dissenters say of their own sect.

"Notwithstanding the great stress which the dissenters generally lay upon extemporary prayer, few of them comparatively seem *actually to join in it*; the greater part discovering no signs of devotion during the service."

"They too generally seem to look upon prayer, as the least important part of their business in the house of God; and some of them regard it as little more than an *introduction* to the sermon, which they consider as the chief object for which they assemble."

These are defects in the con-

gregation; they are of a serious nature and much to be deplored. But whether precomposed prayers would be a remedy for these evils, admits of a doubt.

The following are mentioned as improprieties in some dissenting ministers.

"In the intercessory part of prayer for the *public*, some well meaning men, not content with such general requests to the supreme and wise Ruler of the universe, as best become his ignorant creatures, are prone to introduce their own exposition of public measures and events, and to implore such interpositions of Providence, as accord with their own narrow views."

"Some are apt to be too minute in particularizing cases; and have been known to enlarge so much on the circumstances of some individuals, distinguished either by their wealth or influence, as has had the appearance of partiality; and their mode of expression has been liable to the charge of the *grossest flattery*. This is highly reprehensible. But how much more so is it for christian ministers, when addressing the Almighty, to throw out bitter reproofs, or sarcastic reflections on any of their fellow christians, whether present or absent, on account of either ob-

noxious sentiments, or suspicious conduct. Yet we are sorry to say, we have known ministers ready on all occasions in this way to indulge their angry passions, and that even towards their own brethren."

The faults here exhibited have not been confined to the other side of the Atlantic. The last mentioned fault is perhaps justly represented as the most reprehensible; and yet we fear it is the most common. It is the natural fruit of a party or sectarian spirit, and self-complacency. If to be approved of God, we must pray, *forgive us, as we forgive others*, with what abhorrence must he view the effusions of an uncharitable spirit in our addresses to him! Shall a sinful and fallible worm avail himself of the privilege of prayer, to reproach and wound his supposed erring brethren! What an insult to the Majesty of heaven and earth! Yet how often do such party effusions proclaim, that if the speaker were in the place of God, but little favor would be shown to those against whom the reproaches are directed! And do men imagine, that God can be pleased by such implicit reproaches of his own merciful providence!

A SKETCH OF THE CHARACTER OF DR. KENDAL.

[In our last, it was suggested that some account of the character of Dr. Kendal would be given in this Number. The notice which appeared in the *Columbian Centinel* of February 26th, 1814, is supposed to have been written by an intimate acquaintance

and friend of the deceased. As it is concise, and is believed to be just, it will be here inserted.]

"On Tuesday, the 15th inst. departed this life, Rev. SAMUEL KENDAL, D. D. pastor of the

church and society in Weston, in the sixty first year of his age, and thirty first of his ministry;—a man highly esteemed in life, and deeply lamented in death. Few characters, more deserving of respectful attention, have been formed and exhibited in our country. His early years were engrossed by laborious occupation; and obstacles insurmountable to common minds, seemed to preclude the possibility of his obtaining the learned education to which he ardently aspired. By his personal efforts, however, these obstacles were removed, and the object of his wishes achieved. In 1782 he received the honors of Harvard university, and left that seat of science with acknowledged reputation, as a scholar and a christian. As the gospel ministry was his aim from the commencement of his studies, he paid unwearied attention to theology, and began to preach much sooner than would otherwise have been advisable. Yet such was the ability with which he acquitted himself, that the respectable town of Weston gave him an invitation to settle with them, and he was ordained their pastor, November 5th, 1783. The same energetic and persevering spirit, which under God, had prepared him for the sacred office, combined with a fixed and increasing attachment to the cause of truth and righteousness, carried him through its diversified and arduous duties, with acceptance and success. So animated, fervent, and impressive were his public ministrations, and so discreet, friendly, and sincere his private intercourse, that whilst

those 'of the contrary part had no evil thing to say of him,' the candid and serious could hardly fail to be instructed and improved. He was at once the guide and the father of his people. In him they always found an able champion of 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' a strenuous advocate for the rights of conscience, and a zealous supporter, as well of civil, as of religious order. Nor were his talents or exertions unknown to the christian public. 'His praise was in all the churches.' As an ecclesiastical counsellor, in which capacity he was often employed, his influence, efficiency, and usefulness were conspicuous. His worth was extensively acknowledged. Besides the tokens of affection and esteem which he received from all his acquaintance, the highest theological honor, the degree of Doctor in Divinity was, in 1806, presented him by the university in New Haven, as a voluntary and just tribute of respect for his talents and character. Equally estimable was he in the more retired walks of life. The heartfelt sorrow of his numerous friends, the mournful dejection of a venerable parent, the agonizing grief of an affectionate consort, the flowing tears of a dutiful offspring, jointly announce and demonstrate that his social and domestic virtues were of the purest description."

We subjoin to these remarks an account of the works, which Dr. Kendal published, which will revive in the minds of his friends a recollection of what he was, and how ardently he engaged in

the duties of his profession; and which will remind the public and inform posterity, of the estimation in which he was held as a divine, the variety of his talents as a preacher, and the general character of his mind. To receive this posthumous fame, to have "the good they do live after them," is a laudable motive to action, with every virtuous and benevolent person; and, that this reward is due to the memory of Dr. Kendal, all who knew him will confess; and all who read his publications will rejoice, that so many of his "works do follow him."

Sermon at the ordination of

Rev. T. M. Harris, Dorchester, 1794;—on the love of God, preached at Roxbury, first parish, 1794;—on the day of national thanksgiving, February 19th, 1795;—at the ordination of Rev. Isaac Allen, Bolton, 1804;—at the general election, Boston, 1804;—at the interment of Hon. S. Dexter, Mendon, 1805;*—at the ordination of Rev. A. Williams, Lexington, 1807;—at the ordination of Rev. P. Nurse, Ellsworth, 1812;—on the termination of a century from the incorporation of the town, January 12th, 1813;—Christian Monitor No. 8. containing seven sermons to young persons.

REFLECTIONS ON GAMALIEL'S ADVICE.

"And now I say unto you refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

SUCH was the prudent advice of Doctor Gamaliel to the Jewish Sanhedrim, in relation to the apostles of Jesus. This advice has been generally approved in words, but too often violated in practice. Christians have perhaps universally applauded the advice, as it related to that particular case; but in how many instances has it been practically set at nought in other cases where it was perfectly applicable!

In the Christian Observer for January 1813, we have a review

of the life of John Knox, the Scotch reformer. In the course of his introductory remarks, the reviewer says, "The zeal of the first reformers, for the establishment of protestantism, was revenged by contemporary writers, attached to the Roman Catholic communion, with all the obloquy and invective which passion, prejudice, and self-interest could dictate. Their motives and conduct were alike misrepresented. Their ardor in the cause of truth was described to worldly ambition and the most sordid selfishness. They were described as equally destitute of learning and morality; and even as polluted with crimes of the deepest and most revolting turpitude."

Such was the account given of the reformers, by those from whom they dissented. Yet these

* In his will, Mr. Dexter appointed Dr. Kendal to preach at his funeral, and assigned the text.

defamers would have approved the advice of Gamaliel. But as the eyes of the unbelieving Jews were closed by prejudice, against the piety and virtue of Jesus and his apostles; so it was with the Catholic clergy in respect to the reformers; and so it has often been in other cases. Faults indeed there were in the reformers; but there were also virtues in them, which demanded *esteem* and *not abuse*.

Protestants of every sect readily perceive that the reformers were not treated either according to the spirit of the gospel, or the advice of Gamaliel. Yet in how many instances have different sects of protestants discovered the same spirit towards each other, which the papal clergy manifested towards the reformers! Are people at the present day any more afraid of being found fighting against God, than the Jews were in their treatment of the apostles, or than the papists were in their treatment of protestants? Is it not a truth, that people of every sect, without distinction, consider abusive treatment towards themselves on account of their peculiar opinions, as of the nature of *fighting against God*? Yet how few of any sect are found truly careful in their treatment of others!

It ought to be better understood, that neither the supposed *antiquity*, nor the supposed *novelty* of an opinion, is any certain evidence either of its correctness, or its incorrectness. All opinions were once *new*; of course, if the *novelty* of an opinion is a proof of its falsehood, we have only to trace opinions back to

the time they were *new*, and we may prove every opinion to be false. For error does not change its character by becoming *old*. Hence we should carefully examine both old and new opinions, before we censure or approve.

It should also be understood that there is such a thing as fighting against God, in our *manner* of opposing what is really erroneous. To be free from this charge in opposing what we esteem as erroneous, it is not enough that we have *truth* on our side; but we must have *love* in our hearts. An erroneous man is an object of compassion, and not of hatred. If his error be very great and dangerous, so much the more should our compassion be excited. As every man's present opinion is necessarily right in his own view of it, so the opinion of his opponent must necessarily appear to him erroneous. Here, then, are two brethren, each views himself right in a certain particular, and each views the other to be in error. Both of them *may* be in error on the same subject, but both of them cannot be right in opinion, while thus opposed. How then shall they treat each other? There is doubtless some law which applies in this case, and the same law for each. For God has placed them on a level, as to the rights of conscience. Suppose one of my brethren and myself to be the two. I think I have the right of the question, and that he errs; may I therefore reproach and abuse him? If so, he has precisely the same rule for his conduct, for he thinks he has the right of the question and

that I am in error; he must therefore reproach and abuse me. But am I willing that he should treat me in this manner? If not, then I should forbear thus to treat him. The golden rule applies directly to such cases, and must be regarded, if we would avoid *fighting against God*. It is consistent with this rule, that I should endeavour to convince my brother of error, and that he should do the same by me; but

every act of unkindness and abuse from one towards another on account of supposed errors in religious opinions, is a direct violation of the principle of rectitude, a contempt of divine authority, and a species of fighting against God. It is by *love* one to another, and not by *hatred*, that we must give evidence of genuine love to the doctrines of christianity.

SERIOUS PREACHING.

Concluded from page 125.

It is an important branch of serious preaching to set before men with plainness and force, their *sins* and *danger*. But perhaps there is no part of ministerial duty which requires greater care and judgment than this, and perhaps in none are mistakes more frequent and unhappy. I shall therefore close this discussion with a few cautions on this important subject.

It is a very obvious dictate of humanity and religion, that a minister should give no *unnecessary* pain. To inflict wanton suffering is as cruel and criminal in *him*, as in any other individual. The influence given to him by his office over the minds and happiness of others, is a sacred trust. Let him not abuse it. Let him not for the sake of *effect*, delight in portraying horrors, which chill the blood, and prostrate the spirit of the timid hearer. Some ministers imagine that they preach in vain, unless they produce an immediate sensible excitement.

They must see in the countenances of their hearers the marks of powerful emotion. Now no passion is so easily roused as terror; and to awaken terror is accordingly the object of these injudicious teachers. They too often labour with a fatal success. Their terrifying images, and piercing tones, overwhelm the mind with confused ideas of infinite, unutterable, and inevitable ruin. No language can describe the anguish which this kind of preaching has produced. In some cases the throne of reason has been shaken. The broken heart has sunk under the oppressive thought of hopeless and endless woe. The despairing penitent looks round him with a distracted glare, but not a ray of hope meets his unsettled eye. The happiness of families has been sacrificed, the usefulness of parents been destroyed, and the fair promise of youth been blighted, by excessive excitements addressed to the fears. The minister in-

deed will tell us, that his intentions are pure and kind. But is he never led into an extravagance of terrific description, for the purpose of producing a striking effect? In this case he is responsible for the misery he inflicts.

The preacher should take heed, that he excites fear only in those who ought to fear. Let him beware of those general, unguarded denunciations, which, whilst they make little impression on the thoughtless, rend with causeless terror the humble, self-distrusting, timid christian. Such christians there are in every society, who think only of their infirmities, and are prone to despondence. To such minds, religion often proves a source of almost perpetual anxiety; they are in bondage all their lives; and they owe not a little of their distress to the incautious language of the preacher. The minister is not to hurl round him with indiscriminate violence the thunders of God's law. He is to remember, that to the humble and sincere disciples of Jesus the gospel brings precious and consoling promises; and he should mark out with clearness the characters to whom belong the threatenings of God's word.

There are some preachers, who give much causeless terror, by insisting that no religion is genuine, but that, which has its rise in an overwhelming terror succeeded by an overwhelming joy. They point out, as examples of true religion, persons of an ardent temperament, whose piety began with agonies of remorse and fear, and who sud-

denly emerged from these into heavenly rapture. Hearers of a less impassioned character, but who are truly sincere in their love of God and duty, are thrown into a state of anxiety and depression, when they hear these descriptions of religion. With *them*, religion has been a rational, and silent work. Perhaps the seeds of piety were implanted in their earliest years, and have grown with their growth, and quietly expanded into every christian virtue. Perhaps sorrow and bereavement first taught them to reflect, gave a mild seriousness to their characters, and brought them back to God. Perhaps their first impressions of religion were derived from affecting proofs of God's goodness. It was the "still small voice" of mercy which penetrated their hearts. The spirit of God descended on them as the gentle dew, and softened and revived them. Now persons of these description are generally the best christians; but they are sometimes distressed, and lose the comforts of religion, because they cannot recollect, that they have felt that deep anguish which they are told belongs to the commencement of a religious life. Such persons need to be told, that there is no religion in being terrified; that perfect love casts out fear; that the threatenings of scripture are designed for those whom nobler motives cannot influence; and that the most acceptable sacrifice to God is a mild, cheerful, habitual piety, expressed in a conscientious regard to all his known commands.

The preacher in setting before men their danger, should be especially careful, lest he reflect dishonor on God. As he values the interests of religion and of mankind, let him abstain from those expressions and denunciations, which imply that God is an angry despot, who delights in punishment, and whose vengeance is never to be glutted with the anguish of his creatures. The affectionate christian loves God as his Father in heaven, and he often shudders at the language in which this greatest and best of Beings is represented. To ministers this caution is solemnly addressed. Let them adopt any error, rather than rob the universal Father of those attributes, which form his claim to the love and veneration of his creatures. The foundation of all religion is shaken, when the Object of worship is despoiled of his glory, and his throne is given to an arbitrary sovereign, whose severity crushes hope, repels affection, and depresses effort. Let the preacher in declaring the punishments of the guilty, always teach men, that God's commands are reasonable and kind, that he requires nothing but what he gives ability to perform, and that he has no pleasure in punishment, but delights to avert it, and to receive and assist the penitent. Let it never be heard from a minister of the mild gospel of Christ, that God pursues with endless torments those sins, to which he has irresistibly impelled us by the very nature he has given us, and from which he has not enabled us to

escape. Such representations of religion are thought to do good, because they overwhelm some minds with fear; but if it be considered how many they fill with disgust, aversion, and horror, how many they indispose to all attention to the gospel, they will be found among the chief sources of impiety. These reflections are needed at the present moment. The present age is too enlightened to worship a Moloch. The day of superstitious terror is past; and if christianity be dressed out in the horrors of heathenism, it will be discarded with contempt, or passed over with silent neglect. Let religion cease to be represented as a gloomy service, paid to a hard master, who calls us to reflect perpetually on his awful power and vengeance. Let it be exhibited, as consisting in veneration and obedience of an equitable sovereign, and in love of a merciful father; as a cheerful and ennobling service, awakening the best affections, nourishing the highest virtues, comforting human sorrow, and gilding with hope the dark valley of death.

To conclude these remarks—The preacher in setting before men their sins and dangers, should ever discover in his language and countenance the affectionate and benevolent spirit of the religion which he preaches. Let him not consider himself an officer of justice, commissioned to execute a severe sentence with unsparing severity; but a minister of a merciful religion, sent to persuade men to be reconciled to God. Whilst

he unfolds the sins of men's hearts and lives with a holy courage, let him carefully avoid all petulance, and uncharitableness. Let him not seem to delight, in proving his fellow creatures to be worse than demons. Let him not impute to the worst motives, the doubtful actions of mankind. Let him not teach his hearers to ascribe to themselves indiscriminately every form and every degree of guilt, and to confess to God, with a conscientious hypocrisy, sins which they do not feel. Let him not speak of Hell with an air of angry menace, or describe the horrors of that sad region, as

if it were the favorite theme of his imagination. Conscious that he too belongs to the erring and sinful race of men, let him feel for the world which he is appointed to reform. If his instructions do not awaken the attention and interest which he desires, let him not, through wounded pride, indulge in reproach and invective—but conscious that the fault may belong to himself as well as to his hearers, let him be quickened to increased zeal tempered by increased humility and love.—He will then be worthy the honorable name of a serious and faithful preacher of the Gospel of Christ.

POETRY.

For the Christian Disciple.

HYMN FOR ORDINATION.

HAIL the auspicious day of mercy!
God the Sovereign now draws nigh;
Lo his servants stand before us,
Envoys from the Court on high!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Full of mercy God appears.

When our Saviour high ascended,
To his seat at God's right hand,
Gifts abundant he received,
Gifts for men of every land.
Of this treasure he dispenses,
From this treasure we're supplied.

Kind Jehovah, aid our praises,
Warm our hearts with grateful love;
Humbly we accept thy kindness;
Fit us, Lord, for realms above.
There with seraphs we would bless
thee,
While eternity endures.

Men, arise! lift up your voices!
Angels listen while you sing!
O may angels join the concert,
Praise immortal to our King!
Praise immortal to Jehovah,
Glory, glory, to the Lamb. C. M.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA.

Extracts of correspondence from Appendix to the first Report of the Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society.
To the Roman Catholic Christians in India.

It is one of the most engaging feat-

ures of the British and Foreign Bible Society, that it invites Christians of every denomination, without regard to their peculiar tenets or distinctions, to join, unanimously and zealously, in the

pious and charitable work, of supplying freely, to all who have need of them, the invaluable treasures contained in the revealed word of God.

It is equally gratifying to observe, from the printed reports of the Society, that this invitation has been readily accepted by numerous christians of all persuasions on the continent of Europe, as well as in other parts of the world; that similar societies have been established in Germany, Russia, and Sweden, and in the States of America; besides several Auxiliary Societies in England, Scotland, and Ireland; and that by their united endeavours, many hundred thousand copies of the scriptures have been circulated, in various languages, for the spread of the gospel; and with the divine blessing for the salvation and happiness of mankind.

The Roman Catholics, in particular, who have hitherto partaken but little of the light which other christians have enjoyed, by possessing the sacred text of revelation in their own language, appear to have become sensible of the benefits arising from this inestimable privilege; and have shown an ardent desire to obtain the Bible, wherever it has been offered to them.

Extract from addresses of native Christians.

Sandapper, a schoolmaster, in his address for a New Testament, says, "Rev. Father, have mercy upon me—I am amongst so many craving beggars for the holy scriptures, the chief craving beggar. The bounty of the bestowers of this treasure is so great, I understand, that even this book is read in rice markets and salt markets."

Sandapper, a protestant christian at Karecal, sent his son with a petition, in which he writes, that on account of his indigo cultivation he removed with his family from Sandirapady, (a village in Tranquebar territory,) to Karecal, where he lives without church and other opportunities for hearing the word of God, excepting the feast days, when he repairs to Tranquebar. As long as he was there he regularly attended divine service. "I hear," he

writes, "now with great joy, that Holy Scripture is abundantly distributed by Dr. John, to every one who longs for the same, without price. My heart is now like a lamp without being trimmed. Now I entreat you, Rev. Sir, will trim it, by giving me an Old and New Testament, which I will read to the edification and comfort of myself and family, and to my Roman Catholic neighbours."

Select extracts from 103 petitions.

S. N. says, he considers the word of God as shewing unto men the way of salvation, calling them to eternal life, and adorning them with the robes of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, he therefore craves a Bible, and thanks God for his mercy, who has put it into the hearts of the Bible Society at Calcutta to bestow the book.

N. M. schoolmaster, is very desirous of reading the Old Testament, wishes to keep every word of God in his heart, in order to get rest to his soul; says, he is too poor to buy, but if it be given to him, he will never sell it under any necessity whatever, but will read it day and night.

Twariay requests the holy scriptures, as being necessary for the salvation of her own soul, and the souls of her household and people, and renders a thousand thanks to God, and to the honorable society at Calcutta.

Wodamutter, catechist, says, the Old and New Testament, which a merciful God has granted by his divine servants, through the incitement of the Holy Ghost, are living words; but he has never had them his own property; several times he has borrowed them from other people, that he might have the comfort of reading them, being unable to purchase them. Now the merciful God, having illuminated the hearts of the Bible Society to place the scriptures for charity without price, he prays to God for the society on account of this beneficial act, and to Mr. Kohlhoff to get for him the heavenly blessing.

D. N. says, the divine word is more precious than riches, gold, silver, or gems; but he has never had the book which shews the good way; asks for a

New Testament, which he will hold as a lamp to his feet and a light to his path all the days of his life, and will read and study it, and walk according to the manner which it directs.

N. A. catechist, represents that when his father was a catechist he received from the Rev. Mr. Swartz a Bible, but his house being afterwards burnt down, it was lost; therefore requests to be favored with an Old and New Testament.

P. A. says, the holy scriptures awaken every one to piety and good works; he is athirst for them. On receiving them he shall pray the Lord God to bless the society according to his promise in the words of his prophet, Daniel xii 3. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

The address of seventy-five children of the free school of Kanandagudi. After thankful acknowledgments for the benefits derived from the institution, they add:—"Moreover, worthy father, your petitioners are much rejoiced by the benevolence of the gentlemen of the Calcutta Bible Society, who have granted them the ripened spiritual fruits, viz. six Old Testaments, and five books, each containing the four Gospels. These books they will use as the weapons of the Saviour for the destruction of Satan's kingdom; and they pray that God may fulfil the promise which he has made in the Gospel to these charitable gentlemen, viz. "Who-soever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Address from the Finnish Bible Society to the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Abo, Dec. 30, 1812.

From the period at which the darkness of Popery was dispelled, and the pure light of heavenly doctrine began to shine upon the inhabitants of Finland, it has been the anxious care of the ministers of our church to pro-

vide, that the oracles of divine truth, or at least the principal parts of them, in the vernacular language of the country, might be put into the hands of the people. But from various difficulties and delays, the whole Bible did not appear in the Finnish language until a century after the reformation; and partly from the poverty of the majority of our citizens, partly from the low state of printing among us, copies of the scriptures have been and continue to be, much fewer than the wants of the people require, and sell at an exorbitant price. This scarcity of that most valuable and truly divine book, particularly as affecting the lower classes of the people, has been a source of grief to all who professed to regard the Gospel of Christ as the only efficacious instrument of salvation. But they grieved in vain, till that sincere and ardent zeal for aiding and promoting the christian religion, which had long ago led you to offer spontaneously assistance to many nations of Europe, Asia, and America, moved you to exercise the same gratuitous liberality towards our nation. We have duly received your donation of £550. This gift, augmented by the munificent grant from his Imperial Majesty, of 5000 rubles from his private purse, and a considerable current for five years from the public Treasury, and still further increased by the contributions of private individuals, will enable us, by employing the modern expedient of standing types, to reduce the expense to the purchasers, and provide a periodical supply of copies for many generations. Thus will the Sacred Oracles, either by gift or very reduced price, be brought within the reach of the poorest cottager; and our children's children be illuminated by that word of salvation, which God hath promised shall endure forever.

For this so great, so pious a service done to christianity, and particularly to Finland, accept our bounden and heart felt thanks; and be assured that the memory of it will remain with us forever.

Society for propagating the gospel among the Indians and others in North America.

FROM the appendix to the Anniversary Sermon delivered Nov. 4th, 1813, by the Rev. Mr. Bates, the following particulars are selected.

The act of incorporation provides, that the whole number of the Society shall at no time exceed fifty members.

Officers elected May 1813.

His Honor William Phillips, Esq. *President.*

Rev. John Lathrop, D. D. *Vice President.*

Rev. Abiel Holmes, D. D. *Secretary.*

Rev. William E. Channing, *Assistant Secretary.*

Mr. Samuel H. Walley, *Treasurer.*

Mr. Josiah Salisbury, *Vice Treasurer.*

Select Committee.

Samuel Salisbury, Esq.

Alden Bradford, Esq.

Hon. Thomas Dawes.

Rev. Jedidiah Morse, D. D.

Mr. James White,

With the President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

The amount of the funds of the Society are stated to be \$23808 39. Of this sum \$8861 56 is considered as the donation of John Alford, Esq. the income to be appropriated exclusively for the benefit of the Indians. \$500 was presented to the Society in July last by His Honor William Phillips, Esq.

Collection in Chauncey Place on the 4th of November, 1813, \$186 40.

Received from an absent member on the 6th of Nov. \$10.

Twenty nine months missionary service was performed for the Society in the course of the last year. \$200

was granted for the support of schools in Ellsworth and Jackson. For ministry in Pownal, \$50. Charlestown, R. I. \$100.

Indians.

Stockbridge. The stated mission of the Rev. Mr. Sargent at New Stockbridge has been maintained as usual.

Narragansets. The grant made by the Society for the erection of a school house for the Indians has been faithfully applied to that purpose.

[Other articles are omitted for want of room.]

Obituary.

DIED at Thetford, Vermont, Rev. BENJAMIN WHITE, pastor of a church in Wells, District of Maine.

At Belchertown, Rev. JUSTUS FORWARD, aged 84, Senior Pastor of the church in that town.

Ordinations.

APRIL 13, 1814, Rev. Samuel Sewall, as Pastor of the church in Burlington, Massachusetts. Introductory prayer by Rev. Mr. Bartlett of Marblehead; Sermon by Rev. Prof. Ware; ordaining prayer by Rev. Dr. Holmes of Cambridge; Charge by Rev. Pres. Kirkland; Right Hand by Rev. Mr. Allen of Chelmsford; concluding prayer by Rev. Mr. Ripley of Waltham.

April 20, 1814, Rev. John White, as Pastor of the third parish in Dedham. Introductory prayer by Rev. Prof. Ware; Sermon by Rev. Mr. Ripley of Concord; ordaining prayer by Rev. Pres. Kirkland; charge by Rev. Mr. Morey of Walpole; Right Hand by Rev. Mr. Bates of Dedham; concluding prayer by Rev. Mr. Thacher of Boston.

Candidates for the ministry in Cambridge and its vicinity.

Rev. Mr. Leonard, Boston.

Mr. William Popkin, Malden,

Mr. Ed. W. Andrews, Newbury-port.

Mr. Joseph Field, Boston.

Mr. Lemuel Capen, Cambridge.

Mr. John E. Abbot, Boston.

Mr. Joseph Haven, Cambridge.

Mr. David Damon, do.

Mr. Hiram Weston, do.